



Health & Wellness News Summer 2008

Fireworks Eye Safety

There is no safe way to play with fireworks. If one of your children was hit in the eye, would you know what to do?

1. Glass or metal from a bottle rocket strikes a child in the eye. There is no bleeding, and the pain goes away quickly. What do you do?

- a. Ignore it. There is nothing wrong.
- b. Apply ointment or rinse out the eye.
- c. Take the child to the emergency room.
- d. Give aspirin or ibuprofen pain reliever.

c. Get the child to an emergency room immediately.

An impact injury, caused by something slamming into the eye, can lead to damage that your child cannot immediately feel and you cannot see. Vision loss, even blindness, could occur within hours or days. Only an eye doctor's examination of the interior eye can reveal the result of an impact injury.

2. After the accident, the child is in terrible pain and wants to rub the eye. What do you do?

- a. Let the child rub the eye.
- b. Do not let the child rub the eye and go immediately to the emergency room.
- c. Give aspirin or ibuprofen pain reliever as soon as possible.
- d. Apply ointment right away.

b. Do not let the child rub the eye.

Rubbing the eye may increase bleeding or worsen the injury.

3. The child's eye has been hit by an exploding bottle rocket, a sparkler, or another type of fireworks device. First:

- a. Tape or secure some type of protective patch against the bones around the eye and go straight to the emergency room.
- b. Apply ointment right away.
- c. Rinse out the eye right away.
- d. Give a pain reliever like aspirin or ibuprofen.

a. Tape or hold a protective shield against the bones surrounding the eye.

Do not apply pressure to the eye itself. Using a foam cup or the bottom of a paper juice carton are just two tips. Protecting the eye from further contact with any item, including the child's hand, is the goal.

4. What is the best pain reliever to give to a child on the way to the hospital?

- a. Child-dosage aspirin.
- b. Adult-dosage aspirin.
- c. An ibuprofen-based pain reliever.
- d. Do not stop for pain relief medication.

d. Do not stop for medication.

Over-the-counter pain relievers will not do much to alleviate pain. Aspirin (which should never be given to children) or ibuprofen can thin the blood, increasing bleeding. Take the child to an emergency room right away.

5. Which of these is the wrong thing to do for a child's injured eye?

- a. Apply ointment.
- b. Keep the child calm.
- c. Tape a patch against the bones surrounding the eye.

a. Apply ointment.

Ointment makes the area around the eye slippery and harder for the doctor to examine. Ointment may also not be sterile.

6. Your child's friends are going to set off fireworks. Your child wants to play, too. You:

- a. Remember that bottle rockets can stray off course or throw shrapnel when they explode.
- b. Keep in mind that about half of fireworks injuries happen to bystanders.
- c. Insist that the child avoid fireworks and take him or her to a professional fireworks display.

a-c. All of the answers are correct.



UV Eye Safety

Sunglasses... are you protected?

Sunglasses aren't just fashion accessories anymore. They are a necessary protection for your eyes. Most consumers know about the danger of sun exposure to the skin, but many are unaware that the sun's rays can damage the eyes. To correctly shield the eyes, the consumer has to know how to select the right type of sunglasses, since wearing the wrong brand actually causes more damage than not wearing glasses at all. Dr. Cary Silverman would be more than happy to shed some light on the right to look for "IN" shades.

Tinted glasses without UV protection cause more harm than wearing no glasses at all. It is important to look for sunshades with the clear protector which blocks harmful ultraviolet light. When light is cut out, your pupil dilates in order to let more light into the visual system. Tinted glasses without UV protection spell trouble because they let more harmful UV rays into the dilated pupil.

Individuals can protect their eyes by simply wearing sunglasses that block out 99 to 100 percent of UV. Such glasses protect the eye from both UVA-and the more harmful-UVB rays. Studies show that exposure to ultraviolet light can contribute to a number of ocular complications, including: photokeratitis or "snow blindness", cataracts, pterygium (an abnormal growth on the eye's surface), macular degeneration and even cancer.

Sunglasses provide one of the best sources of UV protection. While some UV-absorbing contact lenses are now available, they do not provide adequate protection and should not replace sunglasses. Sunglasses are still needed to cover the entire eye area, including eyelids.

Here is a list of tips for purchasing sunglasses:

1. Check for the OSHA label with 99 or 100 percent UV protection.
2. Look for sunglasses that are close-fitting. These will prevent UV rays from filtering in.
3. Look for larger lenses or wrap-around sunglasses to prevent light from entering in.
4. Don't be misguided by price -- higher priced sunglasses usually reflect fashion or durability, not UV protection.
5. Dark-colored sunglasses don't necessarily provide better protection. A clear chemical coating applied to the lens is responsible for UV protection, not the lens color.
6. UV-absorbing contact lenses should not be used as substitutes for sunglasses.

It is never too early to wear sunglasses. Remember, your sunglasses will not make you look better, see more comfortably or protect your eyes when they are in your purse, your pocket or on the dashboard of your car. Get in the habit of putting them on whenever you are in the sun.



Cataract Awareness

Cataract surgery can be a bargain- despite the cost

Everyone, if they live long enough, will suffer from a cataract that clouds the vision in one or both eyes. Because of that, doctors expect spending on cataract surgery to surge in the coming decades as the population ages, part of an overall increase in vision costs among older Americans. However, it's money well spent, say experts.

Cataract surgery is one of the most cost-effective surgical procedures to address vision problems in seniors. It gives a great amount of benefit in terms of years of unimpaired vision, compared with dollars spent.

In fact, it's one of the only therapies that actually cures the condition, rather than simply holding the line against future deterioration.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye, which affects a person's ability to see clearly. Most cataracts are related to aging. By age 80, more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery, according to the U.S. National Eye Institute.

Major vision problems cost the U.S. economy about \$35.4 billion a year, including \$16.2 billion in direct medical costs. And because cataracts are frequent and inevitable, they make up the biggest chunk of those direct costs -- about \$6.8 billion. The primary way to treat cataracts is to remove the eye's lens and replace it with an artificial one.

These surgeries have been around for decades, and doctors have become remarkably adept at performing them, but during the past quarter century, there have been remarkable advances. Ninety-five percent of patients report impressive improvement in their vision.

Back in the 1960s, people were kept in the hospital for two weeks following cataract surgery. Now, people have the surgery with topical anesthesia and go home the same day. It's just what you'd hope for in medicine. It's really true progress. The replacement lenses are also improving. In early days, patients were fitted with a lens that only provided one range of focus. Near could be in focus, or far, but not both. But improvements in intraocular lenses are producing results that are coming closer and closer to mimicking the human eye, allowing people to change their focus from near to far. Patients can actually expect improved vision, rather than vision that simply won't get worse. With cataracts, you can restore their vision to what it was before.

